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Gritz Says U.S. Gave Him Data on Enemy Movements

By TYLER MARSHALL, *Times Staff Writer*

HONG KONG—Retired Green Beret Lt. Col. James G. (Bo) Gritz said Friday that the U.S. government provided him with intelligence on enemy troop movements during one of his POW hunts inside Laos and that he had established access to a member of President Reagan's Cabinet whom he could have asked for help if he had found an American prisoner of war.

Gritz said the arrangements for U.S. government assistance were made before he and members of his search team embarked on three clandestine forays into Laos between late November and last month.

"I wasn't alone on this," Gritz said, underlining his contention that the government participated in his mission. "I am not a vigilante."

The 44-year-old former Army Special Forces officer spoke in an interview with *The Times* during the first leg of his return trip to the United States. During the interview, Gritz provided his most specific description so far of government involvement in his rescue mission.

In response to the interview, Administration spokesmen said again that the government provided no assistance and does not condone Gritz's efforts.

Gritz was interviewed as he and four members of his team flew aboard a commercial airliner from Bangkok to Hong Kong. They left Thailand earlier in the day after a Thai court had fined them a little more than \$130 apiece and gave them suspended one-year jail sentences for possessing a long-range radio transmitter that Thai authorities accused them of using during their cross-border forays.

The missions embarrassed both the U.S. and Thai governments. Officials said the forays strained delicate relations with Laos. Be-

cause of the legal action against him, Gritz had declined until he left Thailand to be specific about his mission, the reasons for his contention that at least 10 Americans remain captive in Laos and the extent of government involvement in his efforts.

In his interview with *The Times*, Gritz said he was passed information via the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok about communist Pathet Lao troop movements during an early operation in Laos last November and December. "They (embassy officials) were monitoring the Pathet Lao radio and feeding us the information," Gritz said. However, he added with disdain, the intelligence was "not very useful."

"The embassy was screaming that we were surrounded and to get out," Gritz said. "We didn't need them to know we were surrounded. I refused to come out. We hadn't finished our mission yet."

Nonetheless, Gritz said he would have liked to have had similar support for his most recent four-week mission into Laos last month. But because of a decision to reduce communications to a bare minimum, he said, this assistance was not given.

'You Have to Plug In High Up'

Gritz also said he had established a link into the Administration at a very high level in case he needed help bringing a rescued POW back to Thailand. "For something like that," he said, "you have to plug in high up, and I don't mean the Defense Intelligence Agency or the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

With the help of an influential "liaison man," Gritz said, he had developed a communications structure that would give him direct and immediate access to a member of Reagan's Cabinet in case of an emergency. "I had some assurance that if we did have a firm target (a live POW), we'd be supported," Gritz said.

He refused to identify the liaison man by name but described him as a "private citizen who has worked with me previously, both in the U.S. and in Thailand."

When asked whether the liaison man was Gordon Wilson, a longtime Gritz associate who has served as his executive officer and comptroller and who Gritz had said in the past traveled to Southeast Asia on occasion to help arrange his missions, Gritz paused, frowned and refused either to confirm or deny the name.

Gritz also refused to identify the Cabinet member he claimed to be able to reach.

He said any large-scale investigation into his activities could embarrass senior Administration officials. "I'm not going to burn the intelligence community or the President, but I will cause certain executive branch officials to answer questions to make it known this wasn't my idea," Gritz said.

He did not say how he will force the Administration to make any public disclosures.

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